

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# INFORMATION REPORT

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1. The announcement in the Neue Zeitung of 27 January 1949 that "the formation of a SED Politburo is a camouflaged restriction of the influence of Walter Ulbricht, who has hitherto been a decisive factor in the formulation of German Communist policy in the Eastern Zone" is false. With the establishment of the Politburo, Ulbricht has gained a clear advantage over Grotewohl and the influence hitherto wielded by him. This may be considered Ulbricht's second victory in the party leadership within a short period and has considerably eased his path to the position of Secretary-General. His first victory was gained over Anton Ackermann when, in connection with the Tito-Cominform split, he forced Ackermann to recant his theory of the "German road to socialism".
2. The composition of the Politburo supports the thesis of Ulbricht's increased influence. Franz Dählem and Paul Herker may be described as unconditional adherents of the party. Opportunism forces Helmut Lehmann and Karl Steinhoff to follow them. Whether Ackermann, a personal opponent of Ulbricht, will dare, after his previous defeat, to cross Ulbricht's path remains an open question. Under these circumstances, Grotewohl's open defense of Ackermann at the conference is of special interest; it exposes Grotewohl's efforts to maintain his influence. Pieck will in any event play the part of mediator. At worst, he will not be embarrassed for lack of arguments to bring about an understanding between Grotewohl and Ulbricht.
3. As far as Friedrich Ebert is concerned, his present importance to the SED rests only in his name. In the Central Secretariat he is still an unknown quantity. Since Max Fechner's political relegation, Ebert has been regarded as the probable successor to the office of Second Chairman. He is very ambitious but not greatly valued in the Central Secretariat. Ebert is to be regarded entirely as a factor in Grotewohl's favor, provided that he succeeds in carrying out his function of Oberbürgermeister of Berlin without loss of political prestige, which is not very likely.


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4. The result of these alignments is that Grotewohl's influence in the leadership of the SED now rests on a still weaker foundation. It must be gravely doubted whether his rhetorical gifts will suffice in the long run to compensate for his ever more obvious deficiencies within the party, and to balance the loss of confidence in him among the many hundreds of thousands of former Social Democrats in the SED because of his pro-Soviet policy. In opposition to him stands Ulbricht with his satellites and his undeniably better connections with the Soviets. There can be little doubt of the outcome of this internal struggle within the party.

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